Dear Citizens of Cyprus,

Please excuse Othello for murdering his wife, Desdemona, two days ago. This is a terrible thing that happened to my daughter-in-law, but you must know my son was not truly responsible for this tragic deed. Believe me, this was not the act of the sweet, kind, and loving Othello I raised as my little boy. The respected man of Venice did not do this awful thing. The blame belongs to Iago, wicked Iago, who drove my son to become this mad monster. Iago poisoned Othello’s thoughts with the false rumor that Desdemona was cheating on him with the lieutenant, Cassio. Oh, he was devious! First, Iago told Othello to watch the way Desdemona acted with Cassio (ACT III.iii.197). Then, he made seemingly casual remarks designed to plant the seeds of jealousy and rage in Othello’s innocent heart. Why else would Iago mention that the reputation of the women of Venice is that they will deceive their husbands as long as they do not get caught (ACT III.iii. 202-205)? Still, my dear Othello did not believe this villain. Not yet, anyway. Then finally, Iago decided to take his evil game to the next level. Secretly, Iago placed in Cassio’s room a handkerchief that Othello had given to Desdemona. This handkerchief was the first gift that Desdemona received from Othello, thus Iago believed the handkerchief would be absolute proof that Desdemona was a cheater (ACT III.iii.318-321). As doubt began to cloud Othello’s mind, he demanded proof that Desdemona was a whore. Admitting he had no physical evidence of Desdemona’s betrayal, Iago told Othello that he had shared a bed with Cassio one night and heard some disturbing things. Iago claimed that Cassio, while talking in his sleep, spoke lovingly of Desdemona (ACT III.iii.416-417). Then, pretending to protect Othello, that false Iago told him not to worry because it was just a dream and dreams are not proof. Poor, trusting Othello became more and more upset with every word that ran from Iago’s mouth. The jealously and suspicion Iago was creating made Othello’s mind increasingly unbalanced. Iago knew he had found the perfect moment to bring up the missing handkerchief, so he told Othello that he saw Cassio wiping his face with the handkerchief that Othello had given Desdemona (ACT III.iii.434-436). In my heart, I know that was when my Othello was lost. When Iago shared the dreadful news, Othello was furious because he believed Desdemona had given away his special gift. What more proof did his anguished heart need that his beloved wife, Desdemona, was being unfaithful to him? Iago had successfully poisoned my son’s mind and there was no antidote. Ironically and sadly, it was Desdemona, not Iago, who dealt Othello the final blow. In her innocence, Desdemona spoke highly of Cassio in front of Othello and his damaged, crazed mind took her words as confirmation that she had betrayed their marriage (ACT IV.i.230-232). Othello was enraged, jealous, and insecure, and Iago was responsible for creating every one of those emotions. It is clear what happened in this tragic chain of events, but it is equally clear that Iago is to blame for the death of Desdemona. I do not want my son remembered as a villain. So, please excuse my son, Othello, for smothering Desdemona.

Sincerely,

Othello’s Mother